



In this email:

- **New exhibit:** *Black in White in Black in White*
- Was J. Sterling Morton a **racist**?
- After the **floods**, what comes next?
- **New exhibit:** *Crafting Culture*
- Is this **machine gun** loaded?
- History Nebraska in the news
- HN award winners
- April events

New exhibit feature's Lincoln's African American community



John Johnson was a talented and prolific photographer serving Lincoln's African American community during the early 20th century. [***Black and White in Black and White: Images of Dignity, Hope, and Diversity in America***](#) will be at the Nebraska History Museum April 1-May 25.

Join us April 5 for a [**free event**](#) featuring live music by Ed "Smooove Grooves" Archibald, food from GrannyWevs Soul Food & Catering, and a performance of "Power of the Spoken Word" by Humanities Nebraska speaker Felicia Webster.



Arbor Day is April 26 this year. Photo: *Omaha Illustrated Bee*, April 28, 1901.

Was J. Sterling Morton a racist?
Here's what the Arbor Day founder said and did.



Morton tried to keep slavery legal in Nebraska before the Civil War, showed questionable loyalty to the US during the war, and opposed black voting rights afterward.

But is it fair to pass judgment on people of the past? Here's what we can learn from one of Nebraska's leading statesmen. [Keep reading.](#)

CRAFTING CULTURE

WOMEN and the BUSINESS of TEXTILES in Nebraska

**Friday
April 12
2019
5-7 pm**

**Crafting Culture
Opening reception
and Free Family Day:**

- Panel Discussion with women entrepreneurs in textiles
- Drop in craft and sewing activities
- Tours of the exhibit
- Read Aloud stories from Africa, China & the Middle East
- Pop up shop

Support for this exhibit was provided by the Pwarr Foundation, Heritage Nebraska, the International Quilt Study Center and Museum and the Quilt & Modern Quilt Guild

NEBRASKA HISTORY MUSEUM
history.nebraska.gov
 151 Centennial Mall North
 Lincoln, NE 68508

***Crafting Culture* at NHM, April 12-July 13.**

Enterprising women are part of Nebraska's story. [Crafting Culture](#) weaves together historical examples of women in Nebraska's dress and textiles industries with contemporary women seeking to make their own mark in the field. An [opening event](#) will be held April 12; workshops are planned for May and June.



After the Flood

We've all seen countless flood images and videos recently, and heard heartbreaking stories of loss. Now comes the next step: recovery and rebuilding.

Nebraskans have been here before. The Republican River Flood of 1935 killed more than a hundred people and left devastation in its wake. And it happened in the middle of the Great Depression.

That flood marked a turning point in the federal government's role in disaster relief. Historian Stacey Stubbs shows how federal agencies, state and local governments, and volunteer organizations worked together in this [Nebraska History article](#) (PDF).

Is this machine gun loaded?

Our Ford Conservation Center conservators had a personal stake in this question. Alternate title: "How not to shoot yourself when conserving antique firearms." [Keep reading](#).



History Nebraska in the news



The *Lincoln Journal Star* covered the [campaign to expand the visitor center](#) at Chimney Rock National Historic Site. \$1.5 million has already been raised!

March was Women's History Month. Chris Goforth went on 10/11's "Pure Nebraska" to tell the story of an [Omaha suffragist](#) who confronted President Woodrow Wilson in the White House.

In the city of Lincoln, at least, this past winter was only the second snowiest on record. David Bristow talked with 10/11's Lance Schwartz about the [winter of 1914-1915](#) and the ice storm that left Lincoln cut off from the rest of the state.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* picked up our story of how Niobrara residents responded to a flood by [moving their whole town](#) in 1881 (and again in the 1970s). The story first became popular through our social media. If you need a flood-soaked dose of historical #NebraskaStrong, this is it.



History Nebraska 2019 Award Winners

These people are making a difference in Nebraska history. [Let their work inspire you.](#)

Upcoming events

Two new exhibits at the Nebraska History Museum have lots of related events.

[Learn about them all here.](#)



History Nebraska (formerly *Nebraska History News*), April 2019 (Vol. 72, No. 4), David Bristow, Editor

Copyright © 2019 History Nebraska, history.nebraska.gov

(Formerly the Nebraska State Historical Society)

Our mailing address:

1500 R Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-1651

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

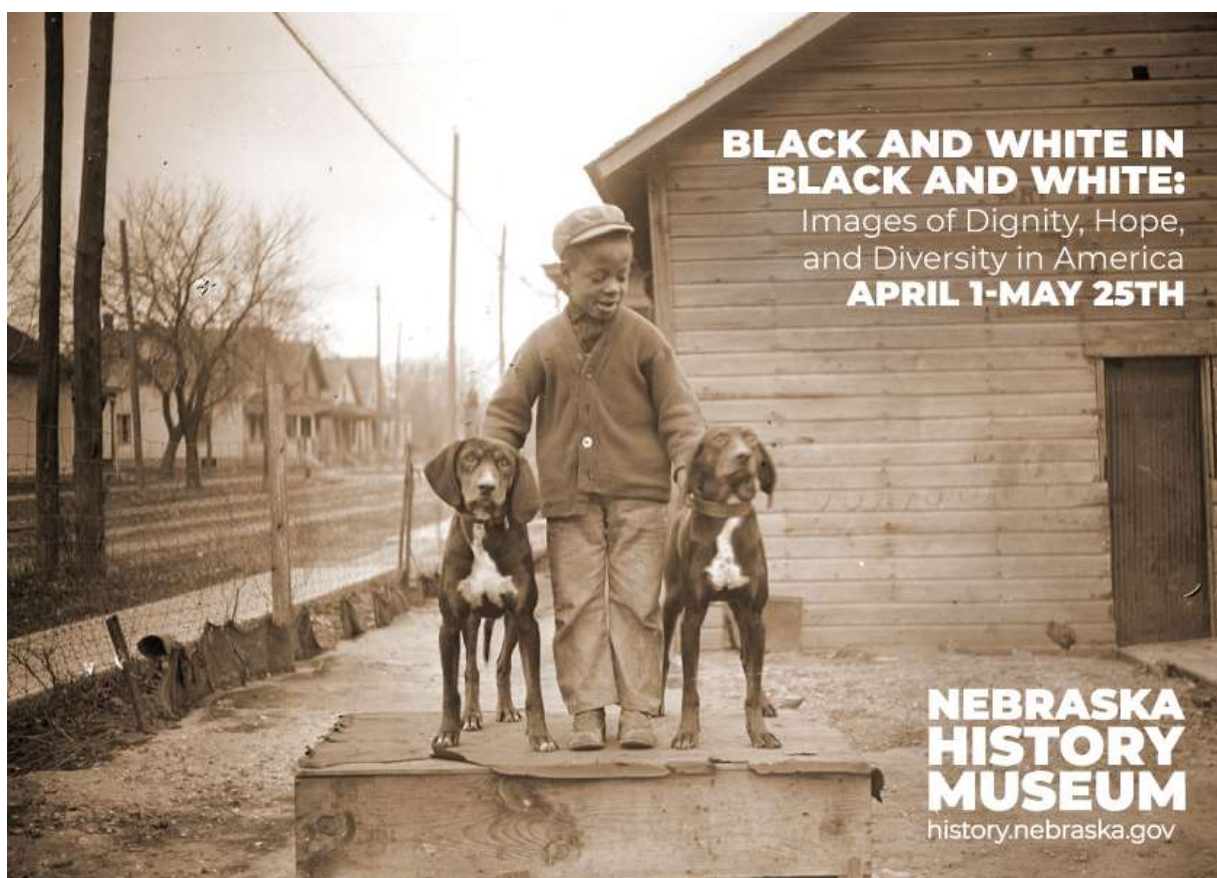
Complete articles:

Black and White in Black and White: Images of Dignity, Hope, and Diversity in America

John Johnson wore many hats throughout his life, but perhaps the most significant one was that of the talented and prolific community photographer. His extensive portfolio of photographs document the daily lives of Lincoln's African-American community from 1910 to 1925. This exhibit includes dozens of Johnson's photographs, each documenting one part of his community. In addition to the photographs, the exhibit features an interactive virtual photo album and sections from an oral history of Ruth (Talbert) Greene Folley's memories of Lincoln's African-American community in the early 1900s.

The exhibit runs from April 1, 2019 to May 25, 2019. Come see it for yourself at the [Nebraska History Museum](#) today!

Black and White in Black and White: Images of Dignity, Hope, and Diversity in America is curated by Douglas Keister and presented with support from California State University, Chico.



John Johnson wore many hats throughout his life, but perhaps the most significant one was that of the talented and prolific community photographer. His extensive portfolio of photographs document the daily lives of Lincoln's African-American community from 1910 to 1925. This exhibit includes dozens of Johnson's photographs, each documenting one part of his community. In addition to the photographs, the exhibit features an interactive virtual photo album and sections from an oral history of Ruth (Talbert) Greene Folley's memories of Lincoln's African-American community in the early 1900s.

The exhibit runs from April 1, 2019 to May 25, 2019. Come see it for yourself at the [Nebraska History Museum](https://www.history.nebraska.gov/) today!

Black and White in Black and White: Images of Dignity, Hope, and Diversity in America is curated by Douglas Keister and presented with support from California State University, Chico.



Ruth Greene Folley Collection (HN RG5349-1-51)



McWilliams Family Collection (HN RG5145-1-1)



McWilliams Family Collection (HN RG5145-1-9)

Black and White in Black and White: Images of Dignity, Hope, and Diversity in America

When:

Friday, April 5, 2019 - 5:00pm to 7:00pm

Where:

Nebraska History Museum

Join us at the [Nebraska History Museum](#) for a free event celebrating the opening of Black and White in Black and White: Images of Dignity, Hope, and Diversity in America, our new exhibit highlighting the community photography of John Johnson. A janitor and drayman, Johnson was also a talented and prolific photographer, documenting Lincoln's African-American community from 1910 to 1925.

The event will include:

- A performance by Omaha saxophonist [Ed "Smoove Grooves" Archibald](#).
- Performance of ["Power of the Spoken Word" by Felicia Webster](#), Humanities Nebraska Speaker.
- Food by GrannyWeavs Soul Food & Catering

Attendees will also get a chance to be some of the first to see the new exhibit, which will only be on display for a limited time. We hope to see you there!

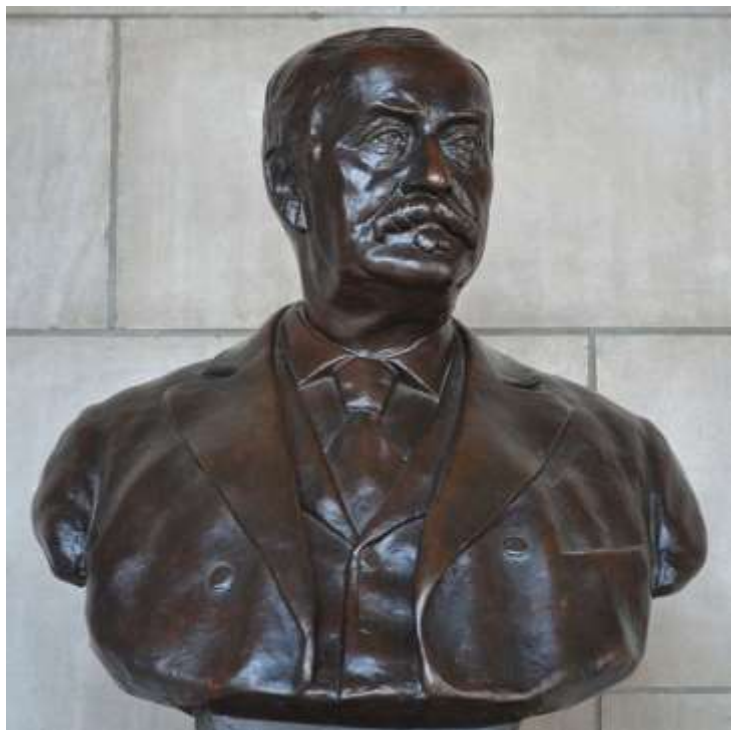
Parking at the Museum is limited, but there is parking nearby, including three parking garages within a four block radius.

Black and White in Black and White: Images of Dignity, Hope, and Diversity in America is curated by Douglas Keister and presented with support from California State University, Chico.

Was J. Sterling Morton a racist? Here's what the Arbor Day founder said and did.

March 29, 2019

By David L. Bristow, Editor, *Nebraska History*



On one level this is an easy question. *Yes. Blatantly. In a loud and unambiguous way.* Though not as famous as he once was, Morton is still celebrated as the founder of Arbor Day. He is an inductee of the Nebraska Hall of Fame, and is the central figure of Arbor Lodge State Historical Park. Until recently his statue stood in the US Capitol.

Morton was an ardent defender of slavery before the Civil War. He opposed the Emancipation Proclamation during the war, and for the rest of his life maintained publicly that that black people were an inferior race not entitled to equal rights.

Consider this:

“I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races... I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office... there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality....”

There you go, right?

There's just one thing. That wasn't Morton. That was Abraham Lincoln. [\[1\]](#)

Here is one of the difficulties with making value judgments about the past. History is full of bigotries and systematic cruelties that people just accepted as the natural order. Hold a hero up to the light, and you're almost certain to find deeply-held beliefs that make you cringe.

So one way to respond to Morton or Lincoln is to say it's not fair to judge them by today's standards.

Consider the Lincoln quote. Which is less excusable: Lincoln saying this in 1858, or someone saying it in 2019? The question is easy because we recognize that we are all, to some extent, products of our own time and culture.

But of course we *do* judge people of past in many ways. Every street, building, or town bearing someone's name is a form of judgment. Every statue, historical site, book, or blog post is a form of judgment. And when we celebrate a historical figure's positive accomplishments without examining the negative ones, that too is a form of judgment. Even without stating opinions, our selections reveal our values and priorities.

So is there way to judge a man like Morton fairly, and maybe learn something useful for our own day?

I think there is. We can ask: *In what ways did this person help create a more just and humane world, and in what ways did they hold us back?*

In other words, we can recognize that people have started from different places culturally and intellectually, and we can look at what they did with their opportunities. We may differ from one another on some points of what it means to be just and humane, but this at least provides a basis for conversation.

The point of such a conversation shouldn't be simply to tear down somebody else's heroes or to defend one's own, but rather to learn from our collective experience.

So let's try it. How does this apply to J. Sterling Morton? His record regarding [Arbor Day](#) is pretty well known. In the rest of this post I'm going to look at his record on race.

Slavery in Nebraska Territory



Photo: Earliest known of photo of African Americans in Nebraska, taken in Brownville in 1864, three years after the territory banned slavery. History Nebraska RG3190-283. Photo at top of page: J. Sterling Morton's Nebraska Hall of Fame bust at the State Capitol.

Julius Sterling Morton was born in Adams, New York, in 1832. He grew up in Michigan, and in 1855 settled in Nebraska City, where he became editor of the *Nebraska City News*. For the rest of his life he was a power in the Nebraska Democratic Party, eventually serving as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. (Read more in this [biographical sketch](#).)

Slavery was legal in Nebraska until the territorial legislature banned it 1861. Nebraska never had many enslaved people, but the controversy reflected the intensity of the ongoing national debate.

Morton fought to keep slavery legal in Nebraska. In 1858 he complained that the “Black Republicans” in the territorial legislature were “reaching out from day to day after the n----r question.” [\[2\]](#) (Morton didn’t use dashes for that word, but I will throughout.)

Morton and the Civil War



Photo: Colors of the 1st Nebraska Cavalry, with the names of their major battles. Out of barely 9,000 men of military age, Nebraska Territory sent more than 3,000 soldiers into the Union Army. History Nebraska 7135-389-(1)

Then came the secession crisis. In 1860-61, eleven Southern states seceded from the United States and formed the Confederate States of America.

Everyone knew why. The issue was slavery. President-elect Abraham Lincoln had pledged not to interfere with slavery where it existed, but he opposed its expansion into new territories. Southerners believed they needed new slave states to protect their “peculiar institution.”

In official declarations and speeches by elected officials, Southern states made it absolutely clear that they were leaving the US for the defense and expansion of slavery.

In his inaugural address, for example, Confederate vice president Alexander Stephens said that the new nation’s

“cornerstone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.” [\[3\]](#)

Morton wanted to preserve the Union by protecting slavery. He supported the “Crittenden Compromise,” a proposal to lure Southern states back into the Union. The idea was to amend the US Constitution to guarantee

the permanent existence and expansion of slavery. Both sides rejected the plan, and Morton's enemies began to claim that his "sympathy with the southern traitors is known and read of all men." [4]

That wasn't an idle accusation. As the Civil War began, Morton's own father had doubts about his son's loyalty, writing in an 1861 letter that "I hope you will be a loyal citizen supporting the Government right or wrong against the southern traitors and treason." [5]

Morton insisted that Republicans had provoked the war, and allied himself with anti-war Democrats. He was a good friend of US Rep. Clement Vallandigham of Ohio, the leader of the "Copperhead" faction who was arrested and exiled to the Confederacy. In 1863 Morton even dismayed some of his Democratic friends by publicly expressing partial support for Vallandigham's proposed Northwestern Confederacy, in which Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois would secede and ally themselves with the South. [6]

Morton attacked President Lincoln in print throughout the war, and considered the Emancipation Proclamation an act of despotism. Morton grew increasingly despondent at what he saw as Lincoln's tyranny, writing to his mother in 1864: "To me the future of what was once the United States looks dark and fearful."

Morton seriously considered leaving the United States. At various times he thought about moving to Canada, the Bahamas, Mexico, or Hawaii (not yet a US territory). [7] But he stayed.

Nebraska Statehood and the Freedmen's Bureau



Photo: The Great Seal of the State of Nebraska. For many years this was a skylight window in the US Capitol. History Nebraska 7434-2

After the war, Morton wrote the part of the 1865 Nebraska Democratic platform which condemned Republican attempts to force Southern states to allow black men to vote. [8] The following year, as Nebraska considered adopting equal suffrage as part of its application for statehood, Morton argued in an editorial that Nebraska should only do so if forced by Congress:

“It will be more manly to accept negro suffrage by legal enforcement than to humiliate ourselves by its voluntary adoption as the price of admission to the Union... We take n----r only when forced to it by Congress and therefore are for remaining at present a territory.” [9]

Congress did just as Morton feared in 1867, requiring Nebraska to grant black men the vote as a condition of statehood. [10]

Morton also publicly denounced the Freedmen’s Bureau, a federal agency that provided temporary services to formerly enslaved people. In 1866 Morton called the bureau “an outrage upon the white population of the country... [expending] \$20,000,000 per annum on the education, clothing and feeding of the n-----s, while nothing whatever is being done for whites who are equally poor.” [11]



Photo: Moses Speese family, Custer County, Nebraska, 1888. Speese and his wife, Susan, were born into slavery, and led a group of African American settlers to Nebraska in the 1870s. There they faced many forms of discrimination, but the men's voting rights were secure. History Nebraska RG2608-1345

Later Years – the White Man’s Burden



Photo: Morton in 1889. History Nebraska RG1013-20-12

As the years passed, slavery began to seem less and less acceptable even to those who had formerly defended it. In the South, this changed view was expressed in the growing mythology of the “Lost Cause,” which claimed—against all evidence—that the war hadn’t been about slavery at all.

Morton was no Southerner, and in 1891 he gave a Northern interpretation of the war in a speech to the Nebraska State Historical Society (as History Nebraska was then known). Describing the slavery controversy, he said:

“But through the mists of sophistry and above the wrangle of debate was seen and heard at last a figure of justice demanding mercy and liberty for an oppressed race. And from the first establishment of civil government in Kansas and Nebraska until the sound of the last gun of the great civil war in 1865 there was no cessation in the intensely fierce combat for the natural rights of man.” [\[12\]](#)

Morton neglected to mention his own support for slavery during those years, but does this mean that his racial views had changed?

The best source of Morton’s public opinions in his final years is *The Conservative*, a weekly paper he published in Nebraska City from 1898 until his death in 1902.

(If it seems strange that a Democrat would publish a “conservative” paper, it wasn’t. Morton was a states’ rights, small-government, gold-standard Democrat opposed to progressives like William Jennings Bryan. Party platforms and defining issues have changed dramatically over the years, which is why it’s a bad idea to draw conclusions about present-day political parties based on what they stood for generations ago.)

In his editorials, Morton denounced lynchings of African Americans and protested the persecution of “peaceable reservation Indians in Minnesota.” He hated and feared mob violence, and called for a larger standing army to put down “riots, mobs, or other seditions.” [\[13\]](#)

But he also argued that “government by consent of the governed” did not apply to African Americans, and he endorsed the efforts of Southern states to disenfranchise black men. [\[14\]](#)

In 1899 Morton praised Rudyard Kipling’s latest poem, “The White Man’s Burden,” which framed imperialism as the duty of white nations to colonize non-white nations for their own good. But Morton warned against trying to absorb “savages and barbarians” into democratic governments, and said that Americans who sought to evangelize Cuba and the Philippines with civilization and Christianity “are morally and intellectually very near-sighted.” [\[15\]](#)

In 1900, Morton reprinted a paper from a Virginia medical conference that argued that African Americans had been better off morally and physically under slavery. As a “subordinate race,” the “negro will remain with us in the South, if he will but give up his aspirations to full citizenship and confide his education and government to the whites, who, in times past, have proved their love for him,” and accept his role as “the white man’s servant, ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water.’” [\[16\]](#)

Morton saw unbridgeable racial divisions among white people as well. In an 1898 editorial he praised Italian immigrants for their thriftiness and marveled at “the astonishing persistence” of Greeks and Jews, two “ancient races” that had not and could not assimilate with the mainstream population:

“[A] descendant of Abraham no more combines with the community in which he finds himself than a bullet with the snowbank into which it is dropped; he is always, first and foremost, a Hebrew.”

Even while expressing admiration for other white “races,” Morton nevertheless saw them as forever separate from his people. “We,” he said—addressing his readers, “are neither one nor the other of them, but Teutons, from time immemorial.” [\[17\]](#)

The Teutons were an ancient Germanic tribe, but Morton made it clear that he was using the term to include all of the vaguely Germanic Northern European peoples.

Morton was no longer the angry young man railing against Lincoln. His later writings and editorial choices reveal a man who was convinced of his own benevolence toward other races, looking down on them kindly from across an unbridgeable gap.

Conclusion: How should we judge Morton’s racial views?

A few key points:

First, Morton was a mainstream figure, expressing views held by thousands of Nebraskans and millions of Americans. To portray him as a singularly bad individual is to ignore the deep-rooted racism of American culture.

Nevertheless, he was an influential public man expressing public views, and remains an honored figure in Nebraska to this day. He is a fair target for criticism.

Morton's views on race and slavery were a major part of his political identity, and therefore should be a major part of his historical legacy.

It's fair to acknowledge that Morton didn't represent the absolute worst mainstream views of his time. He held back from openly endorsing Southern secession, and later condemned lynching. The latter puts him ahead of the *Omaha World-Herald* and *Omaha Daily Bee*, both of which openly instigated the lynching of a black man in 1891. [\[18\]](#)

Nevertheless, Morton was consistently on the wrong side of racial issues, ignoring and belittling the voices of equality while amplifying the voices of bigotry and reaction. Abraham Lincoln, quoted earlier in this post, was wrong about a lot of things regarding race, but he and millions of other white Americans were significantly *less wrong* than Morton.

Even our state motto, "Equality Before the Law," stands as a rebuke to Morton and his allies. Nebraska's choice of this motto in 1867 came directly from the black voting rights controversy at the time of statehood. [\[19\]](#) "Equality Before the Law" is a principle that Morton opposed for his entire life.

To return to our big question: *In what ways did this person help create a more just and humane world, and in what ways did they hold us back?* This article deals with only one aspect of Morton's career, but at least in terms of race it's fair to say that he did little to create a more just and humane world, and did much to prevent its growth. If you remember him when you plant a tree on Arbor Day, remember this as well.



Photo: Morton statue at Arbor Lodge, his home in Nebraska City. History Nebraska RG2352-4-23

Reference Notes

[1] The quote is from the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858. See, “Fourth Debate: Charleston, Illinois,” Lincoln Home National Historic Site (National Park Service).

<https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/debate4.htm>

2 James C. Olson, *J. Sterling Morton* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1942), 93.

3 Full text of the “Cornerstone Speech” is posted at Wikisource:

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Cornerstone_Speech. See also, “The Declaration of Causes of Seceding States,” American Battlefield Trust, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/declaration-causes-seceding-states>.

4 Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*, 114.

5 Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*, 123.

6 Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*, 119, 122-23; James E. Potter, *Standing Firmly by the Flag: Nebraska Territory and the Civil War, 1861-1867* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 191-92. Potter also writes about Morton's controversies during the Civil War in, "Would J. Sterling Morton have sacrificed his grandmother for political gain?" History Nebraska Blog, April. 29, 2016. <https://history.nebraska.gov/blog/flashback-friday-would-j-sterling-morton-have-sacrificed-his-grandmother-political-gain>

7 Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*, 126, 130-31.

8 Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*, 135.

9 Potter, *Standing Firmly by the Flag*, 231-32.

10 See, "Nebraska Statehood Launched in Troubled Times," <https://history.nebraska.gov/blog/nebraska-statehood-launched-troubled-times>

11 Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*, 146.

12 J. Sterling Morton, "Early Times and Pioneers," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, Vol. 3 (1891), 101.

13 *The Conservative*, Oct. 20, 1898, Nov. 3, 1898. See also, Sept. 12, 1901.

14 *The Conservative*, Mar. 14, 1901, Feb. 22, 1900, Dec. 6, 1900.

15 *The Conservative*, Feb. 23, 1899, Oct. 20, 1898.

16 *The Conservative*, June 14, 1900.

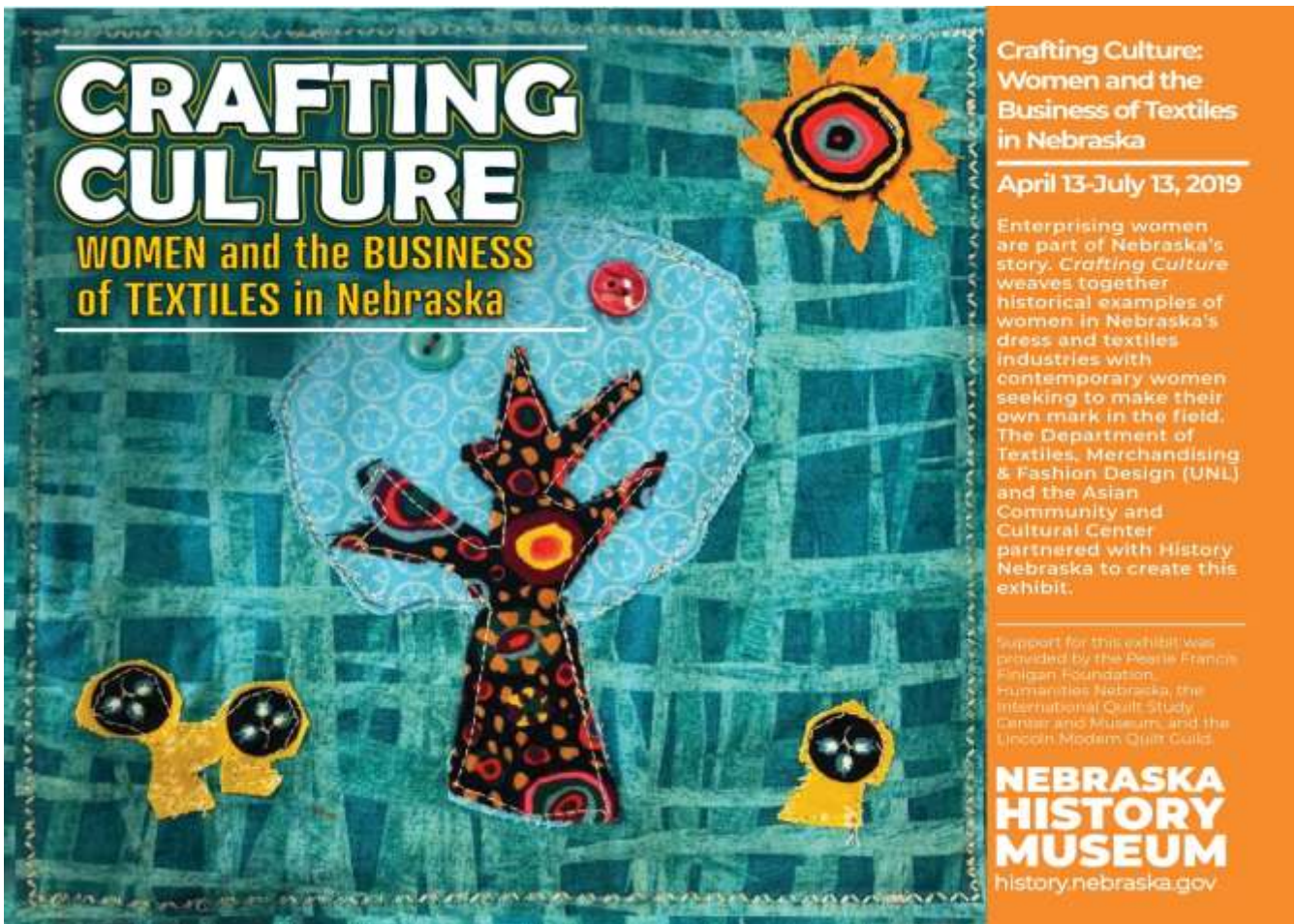
17 *The Conservative*, Nov. 17, 1898.

18 See *Omaha World-Herald* and *Omaha Daily Bee*, Oct. 8, 1891; see also, David L. Bristow, *A Dirty, Wicked Town: Tales of 19th Century Omaha* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 2000), 227-237.

19 James E. Potter, "'Equality Before the Law': Thoughts on the Origin of Nebraska's State Motto," *Nebraska History* 91 (Fall/Winter 2010): 116-21. [Archived as a PDF](#).

Crafting Culture: Women and the Business of Textiles in Nebraska

Share to FacebookShare to TwitterShare to PinterestShare to EmailShare to PrintShare to More



Enterprising women are part of Nebraska's story. This exhibit weaves together historical examples of women in Nebraska's dress and textiles industries with contemporary women seeking to make their own mark in the field.

The exhibit runs from April 12, 2019 to July 13, 2019. Come see it for yourself at the [Nebraska History Museum](https://www.history.nebraska.gov/) today!

History Nebraska partnered with the Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design at UNL and the Asian Community and Cultural Center to create this exhibit at the Nebraska History Museum.

Support for the exhibit was provided by the Pearle Francis Finigan Foundation, Humanities Nebraska, the International Quilt Study Center and Museum, and the Lincoln Modern Quilt Guild.



HUMANITIES NEBRASKA

Crafting Culture Event Registration



**CRAFTING
CULTURE**
WOMEN and the BUSINESS
of TEXTILES in Nebraska

**Saturday
June 8
2019
1-3 pm**

**Make your own
painted scarf**
Workshop:
Led by Lincoln quilter and
instructor Sheila Green. Silk
scarves, markers and
instruction will be provided.
FEE for materials \$15.
*Advance registration is
required. Limited to 20
registrants*

REGISTER AT:
history.nebraska.gov/Crafting

Support for this exhibit was
provided by the Pearl Francis
Finigan Foundation,
Humanities Nebraska, the
International Quilt Study
Center and Museum, and the
Lincoln Modern Quilt Guild.

**NEBRASKA
HISTORY
MUSEUM**
history.nebraska.gov
131 Centennial Mall North
Lincoln, NE 68508

Led by Lincoln quilter and instructor Sheila Green, this event is an opportunity to create a personalized painted silk scarf. Following Green's direction, participants will use provided scarves and markers to create a fashionable scarf that reflects their own personal style.

Advance registration is required. Participants will be charged a \$15 fee upon registration to cover material costs. Limit 20 participants.

[Register Now](#)



CRAFTING CULTURE
WOMEN and the BUSINESS
of TEXTILES in Nebraska

**Saturday
 May 18
 2019
 1-3 pm**

Applique Block Workshop
 Workshop attendees will be guided through the process the appliqué technique to create a quilt block. Led by Lydia Neuman of the International Quilt Study Center & Museum. *The workshop is FREE but space is limited. Advance registration is required.*

REGISTER AT:
history.nebraska.gov/Crafting

Support for this exhibit was provided by the Pearle Francis Finigan Foundation, Humanities Nebraska, the International Quilt Study Center and Museum, and the Lincoln Modern Quilt Guild.

NEBRASKA HISTORY MUSEUM
history.nebraska.gov
 131 Centennial Mall North
 Lincoln, NE 68508

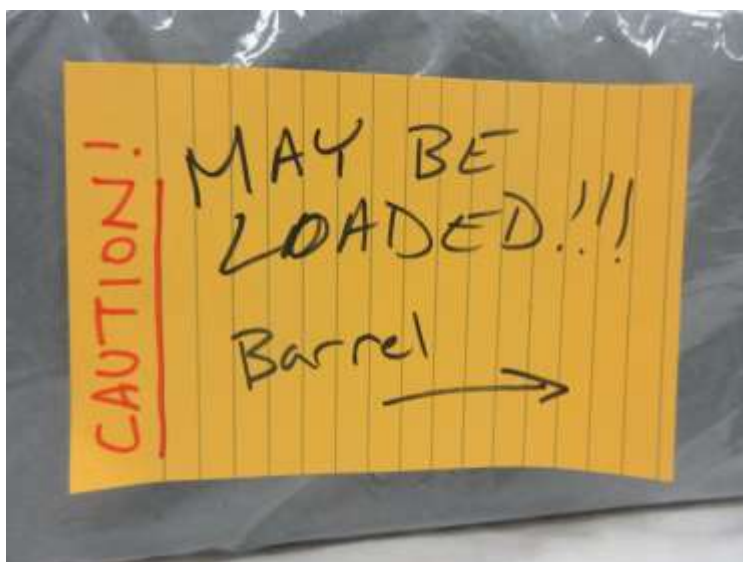
Workshop attendees will be guided through the process of using personal imagery and the appliqué technique to create a quilt block. These samples will be taken home and can be standalone artworks, or models for sewn blocks that can be incorporated into a quilt, banner, book, or other composite projects.

The workshop is FREE but space is limited. Advance registration is required.

[Register Now](#)

Safety First

February 20, 2019



"Caution, May Be Loaded" label on box containing firearm.

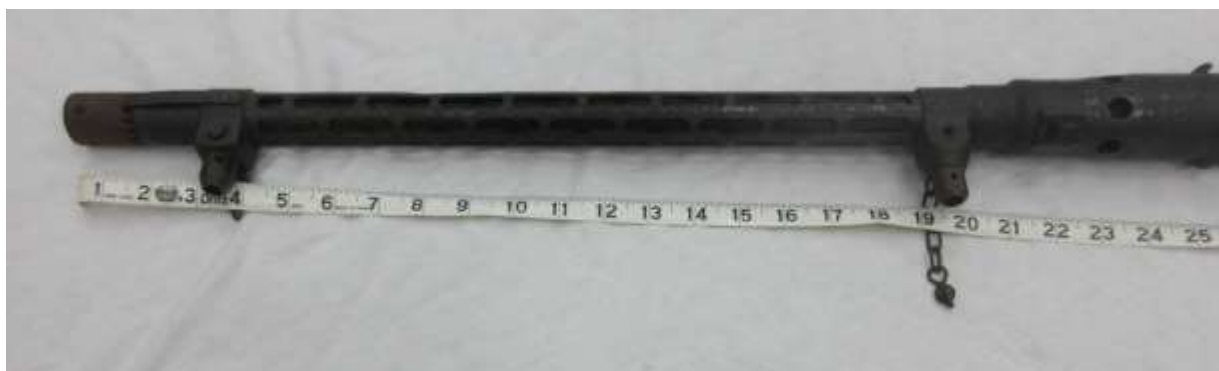
Not only do conservators need to protect the objects in their care, they especially need to keep themselves safe. Whether it is working with hazardous materials or handling weapons, safety is of the utmost importance. Recently, an MG15 German machine gun from the state's collection that had been damaged in a boiler pipe leak in 2010 came to us needing to be cleaned. As with all firearms, before it can be treated, we needed to know if it was loaded. Depending on the type of firearm, there are several ways to check to see if it is loaded. The loaded status of firearms should be noted in collections records, but you should **never assume a gun is not loaded. ALWAYS handle a firearm as if it is loaded.**

With this machine gun, the record stated that it was unclear if it was loaded. We were not sure the safest way to check. We contacted a curator at the Cody Firearms Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. He said to pull back the bolt on the right side of the gun and then send down a bore snake or other thin object to see if the barrel was obstructed. If that didn't work, to carefully place a dowel down the barrel to see if it went all the way down.

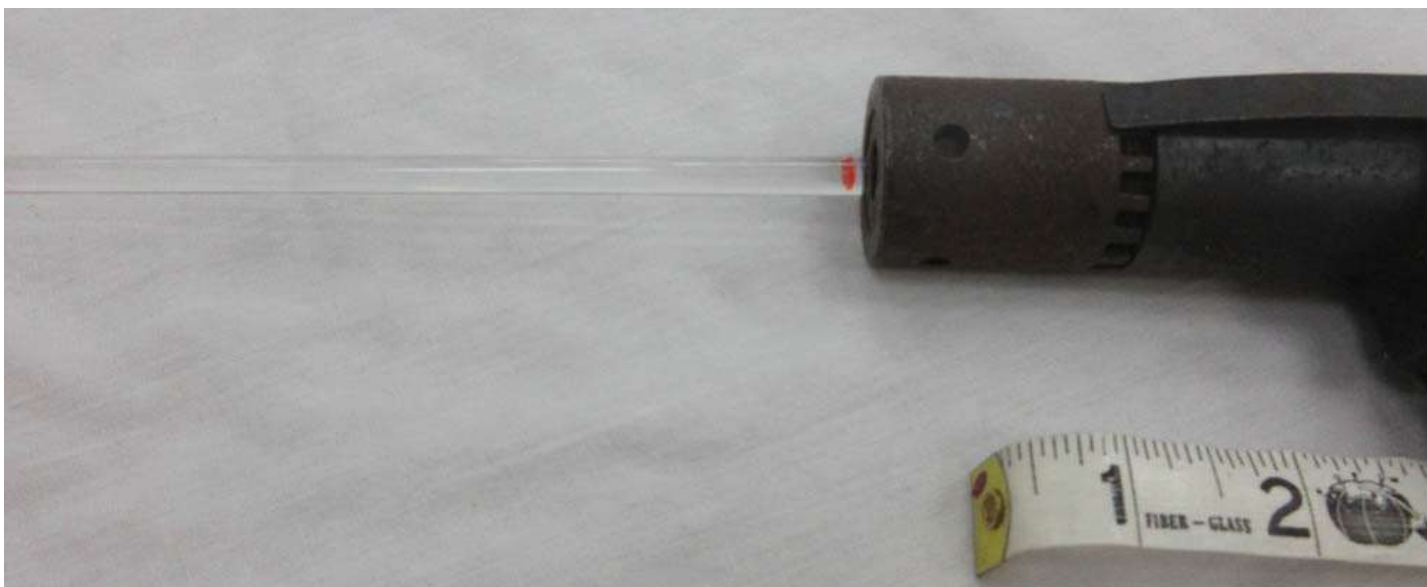


The bolt on the side of the machine gun.

As luck would have it, the bolt did not move, so we had to go with the dowel method. The barrel was measured at 21" long and this was marked on the dowel. The dowel was then carefully inserted down the barrel and the muzzle was marked on the dowel.



Measuring the external length of the barrel. Here, it is 21".



The dowel is inserted into the barrel and the muzzle is marked.



The dowel is removed and the external measurement of the barrel is marked (here in black). The difference between the muzzle mark and the barrel mark shows that the gun is likely not loaded.

The dowel was removed and the difference measured. The dowel had made it down 25.25". The difference was approximately 82mm, which is the size of the original ordinance for this model of machine gun. Because the dowel could be inserted that far, it was not likely that the machine gun was loaded. To be on the safe side, we will contact the police department to get a final assurance for this and other firearms in the collection of uncertain status.

Safety First! There are a few simple but important guidelines for safely handling firearms:

1) **Never point a weapon at yourself or another person.** Always point the barrel toward a wall or the floor.
NEVER LOOK DOWN THE BARREL OF A FIREARM!

2) Before you begin any handling or cleaning of your firearm, always assume it is loaded. Even if it is marked otherwise, check to make sure that it is not loaded. Breech loading guns can be checked by opening the action (bolt, slide, or lever) and shining a light inside or inserting a bore snake. For muzzle loading guns, the dowel method can be used.

For complete instructions on how to check if a historic firearm is loaded, visit:

<https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservation/10-01.pdf>

Additionally, for flintlock and wheellock firearms, a flashlight can be shone down through the powder hole by the lock. Using a mirror to look down the barrel, if you can see the light through the powder hole, the firearm is not loaded.



Using a mirror to indirectly look down the barrel, the light shining through the powder hole is visible indicating that the pistol is not loaded.

3) If you are working on a “retired” firearm, even after you determine it is not loaded, it is best not to pull the trigger. There may be extensive corrosion to interior parts and pulling the trigger may result in damage to the internal mechanism.

4) Always support the firearm with two hands to prevent dropping or putting undue stress on weak points.

Our guide to caring for historic firearms can be found here:

<https://history.nebraska.gov/sites/history.nebraska.gov/files/doc/Caring%20for%20Historic%20Firearms%20.pdf>

If you are ever unsure if your firearm is not loaded and are unable to check for yourself or are concerned about your safety, don't hesitate to contact your local law enforcement (at a non-emergency number) for advice. Your safety is of the utmost importance!

2018 History Nebraska Award Winners

March 8, 2019

At History Nebraska, our mission is to collect, preserve, and share Nebraska's rich history with all people. However, we're not in this alone. There are also everyday Nebraskans that make it their personal mission to do the same. Every year, we recognize the best of those people and honor them with the History Nebraska Awards.

The awards were handed out in early March at the 2019 Legislative Reception held by the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation at the Nebraska History Museum. Those presented with an award are detailed below.



Champion of History Award Winner

Vickie DeJong. Pierce, Nebraska.

This award is given annually to recognize outstanding contributions by an individual or group that helps preserve or interpret Nebraska history. Vickie DeJong has shown a strong passion for Nebraska history throughout her life and has done wonders for helping others connect to history through her volunteering efforts.

She helped to design the Genealogy Help Group at the Lied Pierce Public Library. She has also served as a volunteer for the Pierce Historical Society since 2000 and has assisted in creating various events and displays at the local museum, and is currently helping develop a book on the sesquicentennial of Pierce. She has also worked with her daughter to create five books focused on Pierce County war veterans and casualties.

Excellence in Teaching Award

Robert Kerr. Hastings High School.

This award is presented annually to a teacher who excels in teaching Nebraska history through creativity and imagination. This year's winner is Robert Kerr of Hastings, Nebraska.

Kerr developed and launched a one-semester Nebraska history class at Hastings High School three years ago, which has gained so much student interest that it has grown to four classes. In his class, students learn about natural history with hands-on activities, discuss Native American histories and the impact of white settler migration, and discover the role Hastings itself has played in state and national history. Kerr's students leave his class with an appreciation of history and an understanding of its importance in their education.





History Nebraska Advocacy Award

Karen Windhusen. Syracuse, Nebraska.

This award is given annually to recognize outstanding contributions or assistance to History Nebraska by an individual or organization through volunteerism, advocacy, or donation. This year's winner is Karen Windhusen of Syracuse, Nebraska, who has served as a volunteer for History Nebraska for 11 years.

As a curiosity guide at the Nebraska History Museum, she has been a catalyst for developing new tours that promote curiosity through learning. As a former secondary school teacher, she easily connects with children of all ages from across the state and encourages every student to use critical thinking to understand the subject matter. Her open-mindedness and optimism in the face of daily challenges have made her a model for other curiosity guides.

Preserving Nebraska's history is not limited just to small objects and digital records. we also strive to preserve homes, neighborhoods, commercial buildings, and downtown districts. As part of the 2018 History Nebraska Awards, we also presented two Nebraska State Historic Preservation Awards.

Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award #1

Cohen-Esrey Development Group

The first recipient of the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award is the Cohen-Esrey Development Group, which recently completed a seven-year project o rehabilitate the old Hastings Brewery Building into 35 essential housing units in Hastings. the Brewery building had been vacant for longer than it had actually operated as a brewery prior to Nebraska's Prohibition of alcohol in 1917.

In 2015, the building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, which made it eligible for rehabilitation using federal and state tax credits. This group brought many people together to bring new life into an iconic building in downtown Hastings.



Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award #2

Scott Darling, Katie Darling, Candice Gardea

The recipients of our second Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award are Scott and Katie Darling, and their daughter Candice Gardea, the proud owners of the Palace Hotel in Pender, Nebraska. Built in 1892, the Palace Hotel served railroad employees and passengers and was a hub of activity in Pender. In addition to having rooms to rent, it housed the Thurston County Courthouse and Jail for 38 years before the county moved down the street. Eventually, the second and third stories were closed off, and only the storefronts were utilized.

The owners saw something special in the old hotel and, utilizing federal and state tax credits, they began to restore it. Their labor of love has provided much needed economic development and housing for the community and is an excellent example of the positive impact rehabilitating a historic building can have on our smaller Nebraska communities.

James L. Sellers Memorial Award

Ashley Howard. New Orleans, Louisiana

Every quarter, we publish the scholarly journal Nebraska History Magazine as a benefit for members who support our mission. The James L. Sellers Award is presented annually to recognize the best article published in [Nebraska History Magazine](#) the previous year. This year's recipient is Ashley Howard, author of "Then the Burnings Began: Omaha's 1966 Revolt and the Efficacy of Political Violence." The award was judged by the history department at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, who wrote:

This excellent article recasts the violence deployed on the streets of Omaha in the late 1960s as a deliberate political tactic instead of wanton destruction. Howard effectively used oral history interviews—both conducted by the author and from the Nebraska Black Oral History Project—to complement extensive research in traditional primary sources such as newspapers. While the violence, then and now, garners the headlines, Howard demonstrates that these urban uprisings resulted from years of racial injustice





Asa T. Hill Memorial Award

Terry Steinacher. Crawford, Nebraska.

This award recognizes an individual for outstanding research in the field of Great Plains archeology. This year's recipient is Terry Steinacher of Crawford, Nebraska, who dedicated 30 years of service as an archeologist for History Nebraska. During his tenure, he has been credited for extensively updating our archeology program. Most notably, he:

- Built our historic preservation review and compliance program for archeology.
- Encouraged development of the Nebraska State Archeology Law.
- Was a motivating force behind the development of the Nebraska archeological site Geographic Information System.
- Developed a program that resulted in the inspection of hundreds of thousands of acres, recording several thousand new archeological sites.
- Spearheaded a park-wide survey of all standing buildings and archeological ruins in and around Fort Robinson and excavated several Fort area barracks.